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ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS.

SAINTS DELIGHT TO KNOW WHAT THE  
BIBLE CONTAINS.

Saints have the spirit of their heavenly Father. They do, in some degree, possess that spirit of universal and disinterested benevolence, which God possessed from eternity, which he displays in time and which he will continue to display for ever. They are the real friends of God and heartily attached to his character and conduct. There is, therefore, reason to suppose, that they delight in the knowledge of divine truth. This supposition is confirmed by the character, which is ascribed to saints in the scriptures. It is written, "Blessed is the man, that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." The hundred and nineteenth psalm describes the excellence of the sacred scriptures, and the pleasure of saints in the knowledge of divine truth. The

psalmist says unto God, "Thy word have I hid in my heart.—Teach me thy statutes. I will meditate in thy precepts. I will delight myself in thy statutes.—Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors. Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." The psalm, from which these texts are taken, was composed for the church of God, and designed to express the feelings of real saints. And it clearly shows, that they have a high degree of delight in the knowledge of what is contained in the scriptures.

But it is my main object to show why saints delight to know what is contained in the Bible. Here it may be observed,

1. They delight to know what the Bible contains, because it reveals the true character of God. The works of creation and providence display the perfections of the divine character, but with less clearness than they are revealed in the scriptures. Mankind, for thousands of years, have generally been destitute of divine revelation. And the unhappy consequence has been, that they have also been destitute of the true knowledge of God. But they, who have been favoured with the Bible, have generally known God, though they have not glorified him as God. This proves, that the Bible clearly discovers the divine character. And all saints love the true character of God. They, therefore, desire the knowledge of the scriptures, which were designed to display the divine perfections. They desire to know all, that can be known of the power, knowledge, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy, faithfulness, and sovereignty of God. And since God has, in the scriptures, given the fullest discoveries of his attributes, they desire to understand his word, that they may learn his natural and moral excellencies. The sacred writers abound in the most animated descriptions of the Deity. And these descriptions afford peculiar interest and satisfaction to the friends of God. They love to hear the character of God described, and are pleased to know that he is supremely great and supremely good. The very character of God,

which is so painful to sinners, is extremely delightful to saints.— They love holy benevolence in all its branches, for its supreme excellence and beauty. By the light of divine truth they perceive, that the whole moral character of God consists in disinterested benevolence; and that such benevolence governs all his natural attributes and all his designs and conduct. The whole system of truth, which is revealed in the scriptures, gives the most glorious and delightful exhibition of the divine character, which is to saints the object of their supreme attention. And for this reason, they delight to know what the Bible contains.

2. Saints delight to know, what the Bible contains, because it reveals the supreme and ultimate end of God in all his works. This end could never be discovered by rational creatures, without a divine revelation. Though enlightened heathens have formed some proper conceptions of the natural and moral attributes of God; yet they never could discover his designs in the works of creation and providence. And it is easy to see, that it is impossible to discover what God intends, unless he reveals his intentions. God knows our intentions, because he can look into our hearts. But we cannot know his intentions by intuition. We cannot look into his heart, and discover his designs.— But as God has formed his determinations from eternity, he is able

to reveal as many of his designs as he pleases. And it is happy for us, that he has, in the scriptures, revealed his original and eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus. The Bible unfolds the purposes of divine wisdom and grace. By his word God lets us know the end, at which he aims, in all his conduct from the beginning to the end of time. This knowledge throws light upon ourselves, upon the world in which we live, upon all the objects that surround us, and upon the darkest dispensations of providence. Such light is exceedingly pleasant to every benevolent person; for such persons believe that God formed all his purposes in the exercise of perfect benevolence.—Hence, they choose to know the designs of God, rather than to know the designs of all the courts of Europe, of all the nations of the earth, of all the angels of heaven, of all the intelligent creatures in the universe. For the designs of creatures are subjected to the designs of God, whose counsel shall stand, and who will do all his pleasure. Hence, saints had rather understand the Bible than all other books, which, without the Bible, would leave them in total ignorance of the most important and the most desirable knowledge.—The divine purposes are the highest source of happiness to the friends of God. Nothing gives greater joy to the saints and angels in heaven than the knowledge of the divine decrees. And the

same knowledge affords to saints on earth the highest and purest enjoyment. They love to have the Bible explained, and the supreme end of God in his decrees, and in his conduct, unfolded in all its greatness, and in all its glory. Their hearts are warmed with divine love and filled with holy joy in view of the supreme and ultimate end of God, in all the wonders of creation, providence and redemption.

3. Saints delight in knowing what is contained in the Bible, because it reveals the conduct of God. A great part of the Bible is historical, and gives the most complete and authentic account of the divine conduct, from the beginning of the world to the days of the apostles. This sacred volume relates the creation of the heavens and the earth, and gives us the only certain account of the commencement of time. It relates the conduct of God towards the angels of light and the angels of darkness. It relates the conduct of God towards mankind, both before and after the fall. It gives a comprehensive history of the providential dealings of God towards the world before the flood, and from that event unto the death of Christ. It informs us of the various methods which God took to prepare the world for the advent of Christ, and for his death on the cross. These were in themselves great events, but still greater in their connections. They were necessary to effect the great pur-



pose of redemption, and therefore displayed, in the strongest light, the power, the wisdom, the faithfulness and the sovereignty of God. It is delightful to saints to trace the conduct of God in the execution of his gracious designs. Profane history gives an account of the views, designs and conduct of men. But sacred history informs us how God has ordered and directed all things in the course of his providence to answer his own designs, and promote the highest interests of the universe. Hence sacred history is vastly more agreeable to the friends of God than all other histories. Saints are delighted to see how God has smiled and frowned, how he has saved and destroyed, how he has exalted and debased kingdoms and nations, for the benefit of his church, and the accomplishment of his predictions and promises. In the sacred history, they see how floods and flames, storms and tempests, convulsions and revolutions, and all the great events of providence have concurred to promote the glory of God in the salvation of his people. The history of the divine conduct, which is revealed and related in the scriptures, most tenderly and joyfully affects the hearts of all pious persons.

4. Saints delight to understand the Bible, because it clearly describes the native character and condition of mankind. No philosophers, historians, nor poets, have fully unfolded the corruption of the human heart. Though they

have told us how mankind, in different ages and parts of the world have acted; yet they have never told us how they have felt, nor fully described the moral depravity of the human heart. But God, whose searches every heart, has fully revealed the human heart in his word. In his word, he has drawn the character and condition of mankind to the life. And pious persons desire to know their own hearts and to see the fountain of iniquity, which exists within themselves. They desire to understand what God has taught concerning the fall of man, the degeneracy of human nature, and the total selfishness of the human heart, that they may know how mankind appear in the sight of God, and what they deserve at the hands of his justice. Indeed, they desire to know the real character of all intelligent beings in heaven, earth and hell. And since God has drawn the character of all his moral subjects, they desire to understand the true sense of every passage of scripture, which delineates the character of any moral agent. They desire to know the truth, and the whole truth, respecting the hearts of moral beings. Yet the native character and condition of mankind, on account of their connection with the purpose and the glory of God in the redemption of sinners, are subjects of the deepest attention to saints. And they are highly gratified, as well as interested, by the knowledge of the truth, on these



important subjects. It is only in view of the moral depravity, the ill-desert and vileness of human beings, that they can discern the height and depth, and length and breadth of divine grace in their salvation.

5. Saints desire to know what the Bible contains, because it reveals the will of God. It is the language of every christian's heart, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The Bible reveals the conditions of eternal life, and shews all persons how they may enjoy the favor of God forever. And saints desire to know these conditions, however self-denying they may be. They are not afraid that God will require more than he ought to require, and therefore they are willing and desirous to hear the law and the gospel explained in their full extent. They are willing to know their whole duty, and therefore they are willing to understand every doctrine, every precept, and every prohibition, which is contained in the Bible. It is the desire and prayer of their hearts, that they may know what is that good and perfect will of God, which he has revealed in the scriptures. And whenever the doctrines and duties of the gospel are clearly explained and forcibly inculcated, their hearts rejoice, as if they had found great spoil. In whatever degree saints love to do their duty, in the same degree they love to understand it. It is, therefore, with peculiar pleasure, that they study

and learn from the holy scriptures what is pleasing to God.

6. Saints delight in the scriptures, because they unfold the scenes of the invisible world.— Without the Bible, we could know nothing of the scenes beyond the grave. The heathen have always groped in darkness in respect to a future state. Their greatest philosophers and moralists were left in extravagant conjectures respecting the existence and condition of the soul after death. They did not know whether it would exist; and if it did, whether it would be happy or miserable; and if happy, in what its happiness would consist; or if miserable, in what its misery would consist. But the Bible has clearly revealed its future and eternal existence. It assures saints of future existence, and of eternal happiness in the enjoyment of God, and of all the blessings and glories of his holy kingdom. It describes heaven and hell; and places the scenes of eternity in the most glorious, amiable and awful light. Now, saints desire to exist forever, and to enjoy the presence and favor of God. Hence, their hearts are filled with love, hope and joy, while the scriptures are opened, and they behold by the light of truth such glorious and boundless prospects. It may be added,

7. Saints delight to understand the Bible, because it reveals the final issue of all things. According to the scriptures, all creatures and all events will be subservient

to the most perfect exhibition and gratification of the infinite goodness of God, and to the greatest extent of holiness and happiness, that can exist in created beings. All the works of God in creation, providence and redemption, will terminate in the wisest and best manner, that he can desire or conceive. Saints desire that the highest holiness and happiness of the universe may be promoted and secured. And it is the comfort and joy of their hearts, that there never will exist under the divine government any creature or any event, but what is connected with the greatest good of the intelligent universe. They rejoice that God will move and turn all things, so as to accomplish the greatest, wisest and best ends. They are assured by the scriptures of truth, that they can desire nothing better respecting their Creator, their fellow creatures and themselves, than what God is disposed and determined to accomplish. It is therefore, with the highest enjoyment and satisfaction, that saints obtain from the Bible the knowledge of the happy and glorious result of all things.

JUDAH.

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THE TROUBLES AND COMFORTS OF  
CHRISTIANS ON EARTH.

It is written, "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." Numerous and constant troubles are the portion of human beings in the present life. They who

become truly pious, are not secured against the evils and sorrows which abound in this evil world. In their persons, in their estates and connections, they are liable to many afflictions. Weakness and sickness, decay and death, attend their bodies. And many and various are the evils, which they experience in respect to their spiritual and eternal interests. It is very certain, that the children of God may in this life frequently walk in the midst of trouble. And besides the common troubles of human life, they experience some troubles, which are peculiar to themselves.

They are usually troubled on account of their past sins. They are sinners by nature. And often their early days are wholly passed in the practice of iniquity.—When they are brought to the knowledge of the truth, and are rightly affected by their past conduct, they have much trouble and sorrow of heart for their sins and follies. To real penitents, God says, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways and your doings, that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and abominations." Though the people of God be pardoned and will be saved from the deserved punishment of their iniquities, yet their sinful conduct is not, on that account, the less evil and hateful in itself. And often their past conduct appears so sinful, that it greatly oppresses and afflicts their spirits.

They are troubled by their present imperfection. They know that they ought to be perfectly holy. And they labor to guard against whatever is sinful. Yet they find themselves in a great degree burdened and troubled by the power and defilement of iniquity. They are far from that supreme and constant love to God, which he most justly requires. Nor have they that constant and impartial affection to their fellow creatures, which they are sensible they ought to feel and express. Nothing less than perfect holiness is, in the view of pious persons, their present duty. Holiness is, in their sight, perfectly excellent and beautiful, and sin is vile and hateful. Their sinful imperfection, therefore, is a constant grief to their hearts. The Psalmist says, "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.—I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long." The Apostle, having described his sinful imperfection, exclaims, "O wretched man, that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Sin is the greatest and worst of evils. And so long as christians are not perfectly holy, they will be troubled by their sinful imperfection.

Again—They are troubled by the evils, which exist in the church. They are strongly attached to the cause and kingdom of God on earth. The interests of his kingdom are their interests.

And whatever opposes the prosperity and enlargement of Zion is grievous and afflictive to their own souls. But the errors and sins, the enemies and divisions, which are in themselves opposed to the purity and happiness of the christian church, are very numerous.—In all past ages, great and violent opposition to the truth, as it is in Jesus, has existed in the world. And many persons who profess to be christians, are among the most powerful and bitter enemies of the gospel. At the present day, the true church of God is opposed and weakened by many errors, and by many enemies. If then christians look to the whole church of Christ on earth, they see many evils, by which they have reason to be troubled. If they look to the single church, to which they belong, they will find many evils, that are afflictive and painful.—There are few single churches, which have not such members, as afford no pleasing evidence of true friendship and faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ. And in most churches, there are such members, as exhibit sorrowful appearances of impenitence and impiety. What the Apostle said of religious professors in his day may be truly said at the present time—"Many walk, of whom I have told you often and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame; who mind earthly



things." Among the greatest evils and troubles, which christians experience, are the errors and sins, which exist in professors of the true and holy gospel.

Again—Christians are troubled by the evils which abound in the world. They know that mankind by nature are universally and totally estranged from God; that they are subjected to his holy displeasure and condemned by the law to the pains of endless death. They see the greater part of their fellow creatures are involved in the grossest ignorance and the most destructive delusions and superstitions. The Psalmist says, "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." The people of God have often seen the world filled with violence, and covered with blood. And this world still affords constant and abundant occasion for grief and sorrow to such persons, as either fear God or regard man. By the wickedness and misery, which so generally prevail on the earth, the people of God are often obliged to "walk in the midst of trouble." The evils and troubles, which have now been mentioned, are, in a greater or less degree, common to all pious persons. And they are liable to be distressed and disheartened by these great evils and constant troubles.

But let us now turn our attention to the bright and pleasant side of things; and consider the comforts of christians, even in the midst of their troubles. In all their

troubles there is a sufficient and immutable foundation for their consolation. God is the comfort of his people. To his people he says, "I, even I, am he, that comforteth you." In God, his people see infinite perfection and excellence. His knowledge, power, wisdom, goodness, mercy and faithfulness are unchangeable. In the exercise of perfect and infinite goodness, he has made, and preserves, and governs all things. And he will cause all things to subserve his own glory, and the glory of his kingdom and the good of his people. Under his perfect government there can exist nothing, but what shall be, on the whole, wisest and best. In view of his perfections, designs and works, the people of God will be raised above all their troubles, and comforted with everlasting consolation. When they truly turn to God and rest upon him, they now find support and relief. To his afflicted disciples, the Savior said, "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." True faith in God and the Lord Jesus Christ will relieve and remove the troubles of his people, and afford peace and joy to their hearts. In God there is a sufficient and immoveable foundation of comfort to his people, whatever may be their troubles.

And God promises to comfort his people. By Isaiah, it is written, "The Lord shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wil-

derness as Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein; thanksgiving and the voice of melody." By Jeremiah, God says, "I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.—My people shall be satisfied with my goodness." And the Savior says, "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." To his disciples he also said, "I will not leave you comfortless." There are many other divine promises, which afford assurance, that God will comfort his people respecting all the evils, troubles and sorrows they ever experience. It is written, "all things work together for good to them that love God." The people of God are often involved in great darkness respecting many evils, which they suffer in this life.—They may imagine that there can be no wise and good reasons for their troubles. But God has the wisest and best reasons for his own conduct in their bitterest afflictions and heaviest sorrows. And he is able and willing to fulfil his promises to his people. They ought, therefore, to be assured, that he will turn their sorrow into joy, and their troubles into comforts. He is faithful to his promises of everlasting consolation to his people.

Again—The conduct of God towards his people, agrees with his promises. They have been obliged to turn to him for light, sup-

port and comfort. And they have always found him a refuge and strength, and a very present help in trouble. In many instances the whole church of God on earth has been surrounded by enemies and dangers, and been brought to the very verge of destruction. But God has protected, relieved, and preserved his kingdom, in the face of earth and hell. Every pious person has frequently been in the midst of trouble; but God has never forgotten, nor forsaken those who have trusted in him. Jacob and Joseph, Job and David, Daniel and Joseph, had severe and painful afflictions and trials; but they were even in this life, abundantly comforted and satisfied in respect to all their sorrows. From their own experience, the people of God have had reason to say—"The Lord will not cast off forever; but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies; for he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." From the perfections, the promises, and the conduct of God, it is certain that his people will have comforts, exceeding abundantly above all their troubles.

Since christians are subjected to many troubles in this life, they ought not to expect freedom from trouble, while they remain on earth. They are very apt to deceive themselves in respect to their present state. They commonly imagine, they may have fewer and less troubles in future,

than they have had in times that are past, or than they have at present. If they have had many troubles, they hope on that account, they have already suffered their portion of affliction and sorrow. If their present prospects are favorable, and they perceive no way, in which troubles may arise, they are ready to promise themselves they shall have rest. In his prosperity Job said, "I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand." But how little did he then foresee of what he had to suffer in the future events of divine providence. The Psalmist says, "In my prosperity, I said, I shall never be moved.—Lord, by thy favor thou hast made my mountain to stand strong."—But his mountain soon shook and trembled, and he was thrown into trouble. The experience of pious persons in all ages, the declarations of divine truth, the condition of this world, and the design of their present existence, unite to teach the people of God never to expect freedom from trouble, while they remain on earth. They ought to be assured that they shall experience the accomplishment of the Savior's declaration to his disciples—"In the world ye shall have tribulation."

If the people of God have comforts as well as troubles in this life, then we may easily form a correct opinion of their present state. Incorrect opinions on this subject, very commonly exist. It is sometimes thought that if per-

sons become truly pious, they will have no more trouble and sorrow. But it is also supposed, that pious persons, in this life, are commonly gloomy, afflicted and sorrowful.—In the scriptures, christians are taught to expect enemies and conflicts, temptation and troubles.—But they are required to be always contented and joyful. Christians sometimes speak of great darkness, distress and discouragement. At other times, they speak of their comforts and joys. What, then, is the truth respecting the present state of pious persons? Is it happy or unhappy? Their state on earth is doubtless, strangely mixed with light and darkness, trouble and comfort, sorrow and joy, hope and fear, good and evil, glory and shame. In themselves, they are sinful, guilty, hateful, wretched and ruined creatures.—Nor can this world, nor can all created beings afford any real relief and permanent happiness to their souls. But pious persons turn to God and trust in him. If they look to God, they have light and life, joy and glory. In the state of christians on earth, there are things directly and totally opposite. If they are seen without God for their hope and portion, they have nothing, and are worse than nothing. If they are seen with God, all things are theirs, and their state is safe, happy and glorious. The whole truth respecting their comforts and troubles, respecting God and themselves must be regarded, if we



would form a correct opinion of the present state of real christians.—Though christians have troubles as well as comforts, they have no reason to be disheartened by the evils they experience. Their troubles are so many, so constant, and sometimes so unexpected and unaccountable, that they are liable to sink into distress and discouragement. Sometimes they have refused to be comforted, and have resolved to harden themselves in sorrow. And they may for a time renounce their faith and hope in God. Zion said, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." But God said, "Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." The apostle says to christians, "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." James says, "My brethren, count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations." And Peter says, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, that is to try you."

Though christians have no reason to be disheartened by their troubles, they ought always to

trust in God for comfort. When they turn to God in trouble, they find support and comfort in him. But they often turn from God in their troubles and seek relief and help from creatures. Yet they find that all creatures are miserable comforters. The children of God should have their hearts always fixed by trusting in him.—Then they would never be greatly moved, but would be exceedingly joyful in all their tribulation. His perfections, his promises and his conduct, are as firm as the everlasting mountains, and more durable than the foundations of the earth.

Though christians may always find comfort in God, yet since they will have troubles as long as they live, their dismissal from this world must be to christians a very joyful event. When removed from this state of sin, shame and sorrow, they will have received all their evil things, and they will be comforted and joyful forever.—The apostle says, "Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things that are seen, are temporal; but the things that are not seen, are eternal." The pious Psalmist in his troubles and sorrows on earth, could turn to God, and in view of heaven, could say, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satis-

fied, when I awake with thy likeness.”

ZEBULON.

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SERMONS—No. II.

CONSTANT ADVANCEMENT IN RELIGION  
THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS.

PHILLIP. III. 13.—*This one thing I do.*

In the chapter, which contains the text, the apostle describes his religious character before he embraced the gospel. He then declares his sentiments respecting the Lord Jesus Christ and the method of salvation through his death. Though he was conscious of true faith in the Savior and of a good hope through grace, yet he was deeply sensible of his moral imperfection. He says, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Jesus Christ. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things, which are behind and reaching forth unto those things, which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Constant advancement in religious attainments was the object of the apostle. And it should be the object of every christian. In respect to this object every christian should be able truly to say, “This one thing I do.” This, then, is the sentiment, which lies before us in the

present discourse; Constant advancement in religion is the duty of every christian.

To illustrate this sentiment it is proposed,

I. To show in what respects christians may advance in religion; and,

II. To show that constant advancement in such respects is the duty of every christian. It is proposed,

I. To show in what respects christians may advance in religion. And it may be observed,

1. That christians may advance in divine knowledge. The Savior said unto his disciples, “it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” Respecting divine subjects christians have real knowledge; and not merely notions and opinions. This knowledge begins, when God, who commanded the light to shine from darkness, shines in their hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. This true knowledge of divine things is, at first, very limited and indistinct. But it will constantly increase. For it is written, “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” As christians advance in divine knowledge, their views of the same subjects become more accurate and extensive. They also become acquainted with a greater number of subjects. And they more clearly perceive the connections and consequences of

the essential doctrines and duties of the gospel. Divine truth exhibits the perfections, designs and works of God. As these subjects of religious instruction are unbounded, so no limits can be set to the progress of christians in divine knowledge. They may advance in their knowledge of divine truth forever.

2. Christians may advance in holiness. Though every gracious affection in christians be perfectly holy and pure; yet, in this life, they have many affections, that are totally unholy and sinful.— While they are imperfect, their progress in holiness chiefly consists in the increasing constancy of holy affections. In this respect they may greatly advance, though in the present life they never become perfectly holy. The holy affections of christians may also become more enlarged, as well as more constant. As they obtain a more thorough and extensive knowledge of divine things, their hearts are enlarged in the exercise of holy affections. In the constancy and enlargement of their holy affections, christians may advance during the present life.— And in the enlargement of holy affections they may advance forever. Though christians are perfectly holy, when they enter heaven, yet this perfection no more implies that they cannot then advance in holiness, than the perfection of God, of angels and saints implies, that they are equally holy. As perfectly holy beings are

not equal in the degrees of holiness, so the saints, when perfectly holy, may in an important respect, still advance in holiness. As their natural capacity shall be increased by divine knowledge, their moral perfection will be advanced by the enlargement of holy affections.

3. Christians may advance in usefulness. To his disciples the Savior says, “Ye are the salt of the earth. Ye are the light of the world.” By the spirit they possess, the doctrines they maintain, the duties they perform and the blessings they enjoy, they preserve all the real virtue, knowledge, piety and happiness, that exist among mankind. The happy effects of their principles, exertions and prayers spread far and wide, and continue from age to age. In proportion to their knowledge and holiness, christians are prepared and disposed to be useful. If they are feeble and sickly in their spiritual condition, they are rather a burden than a benefit in the church of God. Like babes, they need great and constant attention, kindness and care, while they are unfit for any important service, or useful labor. But growing christians are able to assist in the cause of truth, and are disposed to abound in the work of the Lord. They are a help and not a hindrance to their brethren. Many christians have, in this life, been useful beyond any limits, that we can assign. And every christian may become “like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bring-



eth forth his fruit in his season ; his leaf also shall not wither ; and whatsoever he doth shall prosper." Nor will the usefulness of christians cease or lessen in the future state. In heaven they will serve God for ever with increasing knowledge and holiness. And by their holy and useful services, they will afford delight to the holy angels, and to their redeemed brethren ; to the Lord Jesus Christ, to God the Father, and to the eternal Spirit. As christians may for ever advance in other religious attainments, so they may for ever advance in usefulness.

4. Christians may advance in happiness. Their happiness arises from their communion with the living and true God. His perfections, designs, and works are the sources of their delight and joy. As these sources of their happiness are eternal and unbounded, their enjoyments may not only continue, but increase for ever. John writes to his brethren, "What we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us ; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.— And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." As christians advance in knowledge, holiness and usefulness, their spiritual communion with God increases and they advance in happiness. Nor is there any thing, that can interrupt or lessen their joy. God is pleased with his own infinite perfections, with all his designs

and conduct. The existence of every creature, every action and every event, affords delight to the supreme Being, who has made all things for himself, and works all things after the counsel of his own will. God sees all things in their proper connections and consequences. And though many things exist which are evil and hateful in themselves, yet their existence is, on the whole, wisest and best. As the affections and designs of God respecting all his creatures, and all events are perfect in wisdom and goodness, he rejoices in all his works. And as his people rise above themselves, and above all created beings, and enjoy more intimate and enlarged communion with their heavenly Father, their spiritual happiness increases. Even in this life, they have reason to rejoice always, and to rejoice in all things. And in the future state, as the glory of God will be for ever unfolding with increasing brightness and beauty, in the accomplishment of his eternal purposes, their happiness in the knowledge, love, service and praise of God, will continue and increase for ever. It is proposed,

II. To show that constant advancement in religion is the duty of every christian.

The apostle says, "This one thing I do, forgetting the things, that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God

in Christ Jesus." Though it is probable the apostle had made as great progress in religion, as any christian that ever lived, yet he would not rest in any present attainments. And every christian ought to follow his example.—That constant advancement in religion is the duty of christians may appear from the following considerations.

1. Their imperfection should induce christians to make constant advancement in religious attainments. They are, in all respects, very imperfect. The apostle was deeply sensible of his imperfection, as he declares in our context. And his imperfection had its proper influence upon his conduct. It excited him to be constant and earnest in his exertions to advance towards perfection. And by the same consideration every christian should be excited to conduct in the same manner. Whatever progress christians may have made in religion, they ought to forget the things that are behind. They ought to consider how far they are from the mark they are bound to reach. The apostle blames the Hebrew christians, because they had made no greater progress in divine knowledge. He says, "When for the time, ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such, as have need of milk and not of strong meat. For every one, that useth

milk, is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe." If christians would be but truly sensible of their imperfections, they would perceive, that the one thing, which they ought to desire and pursue, is constant advancement in religious attainments.

2. God requires christians to make constant advancement in religion. He says, by the apostle, unto the church of the Thessalonians, "Furthermore, then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus Christ, that as ye have received of us, how ye ought to walk and please God, so ye would abound more and more." Again he says, "as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren, who are in all Macedonia; but, we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more." Peter urges his brethren to advance in the divine life. He says, "giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you, that ye shall neither be idle nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Again he says, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." These

divine requirements urge and bind christians, whatever progress they may have made, constantly to advance in religion.

3. God has appointed the best means to promote the religious advancement of christians. To the saints at Ephesus, it is written, "He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints; for the work of the ministry; for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ." Here we are taught, that the great object, for which God appoints the religious instructions and privileges, which christians enjoy, is their progress in religious attainments. For this purpose they have the holy scriptures. For this purpose they have the ministry of the gospel. For this purpose they have divine ordinances. For this purpose they are separated from the world by a public profession of religion. [And for this purpose they are subjected to the discipline, which the Lord Jesus Christ

requires his churches to maintain in his name. Now, since God appoints such means to promote the religious advancement of christians, they ought to unite with him in this important design, and not receive his grace in vain.

4. To obtain the great object of their profession, it is necessary for christians to advance in religion. The knowledge, the service and enjoyment of the living and true God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the present life and in the future existence, are what persons profess to desire and pursue, when they profess and bear the name of christians. To gain the great object of their profession, they must renounce every contrary interest and pursuit. In our context, the apostle says, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."—The blessedness and glory, which the apostle sought, he calls "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." To gain this prize, he constantly labored to advance in religious attainments.—Without such advancement, he knew he could not be prepared to be with Christ in heaven. And no christian can enter heaven, until he is completely formed into a vessel of mercy, and fitted for the pure and perfect society of those blessed mansions. Neither the profession, nor the privileges, nor



the experiences, nor the sacrifices, nor the services, nor the enjoyments of christians will avail any thing towards their admission into heaven, unless they become perfect and entire, wanting nothing. Unless they advance in religion, until they are perfectly holy, they never can gain the great object, for which they profess to renounce the world, the flesh and Satan.— They must, therefore, constantly advance in religion, in order to gain the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

#### IMPROVEMENT.

1. In view of the attainments, in which christians may forever advance, it is evident that the church must afford the Lord Jesus Christ a high degree of delight. The growth of any object in what is valuable and beautiful is pleasant. The growth of children is interesting and delightful. It is pleasant to trace the commencement and progress of communities, whether civil or religious. The rise and growth of states, kingdoms and nations, and their advancement in literature, policy, science, arts and wealth, have always excited a high degree of attention and interest. But these objects, though for a time, they advance and flourish, are never perfect. They soon decline and perish. But christians grow in such respects, as are most important and beautiful. And their growth continues and increases, until they arrive to perfection.—

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Such is the growth of a christian. But consider the growth of the whole church. The church may be seen in its commencement and progress on earth. It has been maintained and enlarged through successive ages, notwithstanding its own weakness and the number and power of its enemies. At a future day it will be prosperous and triumphant among all nations. At the final judgment, the millions and millions of redeemed sinners, will be raised to the perfection of heavenly blessedness and beauty. Yet, then, they will for ever advance in knowledge, holiness, usefulness and happiness. All this life, growth and glory, the church receives from the Lord Jesus Christ. In him was formed the eternal purpose of redemption.— He begins and finishes this purpose. He creates, preserves and governs all things in reference to his spiritual kingdom. For this object he came into the world, became a man of sorrows and died on the cross. But he is now “head over all things unto the church, which is his body; the fulness of him, that filleth all in all.” The redemption, advancement and glory of the church will for ever exercise and gratify his benevolent affections. He says, that from eternity his “delights were with the sons of men.” It is written “for the joy set before him, he endured the cross.” It is also written, “He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.” The eternal and increasing excellence

and glory of his redeemed people will for ever afford the Lord Jesus Christ the highest enjoyment and satisfaction.

2. From what has been said in the present discourse, it is evident, that no christian can ever have any reason to think highly of his religious attainments. Mankind are, by nature, disposed to think themselves something when they are nothing. And real christians have strong and violent conflicts with a proud and selfish spirit.— They are liable to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. They are apt to think highly of their religious opinions, affections, services and enjoyments. But they have no reason to think highly of their spiritual attainments. They ought not to think that they have already attained; or that they are already perfect. Compared with what some christians have attained in this life, most christians have made but little progress in religion. And their progress appears still less, when it is compared with what all christians ought to be.— But the highest attainments of such christians, as have made the greatest progress in religion, are not worthy to be compared with the future attainments of such christians, as are now mere babes in Christ. But even with an eternal progression in excellence, christians must for ever be nothing and less than nothing in the presence of the supreme Being. Christians,

then, should never think highly of themselves, or of their religious attainments. It becomes every christian to sink into his proper place, and to impress very deeply upon his own heart the sentiment of the apostle, who says, “I am nothing.”

3. Since christians should constantly advance in religion, they never should make of themselves a standard in respect to religion. If they imagine themselves to be a standard in religion, they act as if they had already attained, and were already perfect. By such unwise conduct they prevent their progress in religion. To the saints at Corinth, the apostle writes, “We dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” It is unwise for a person to measure himself by himself. And it is more unwise for a person to measure other persons by himself. Yet many professors of religion are so unwise, that they will admit of nothing but what agrees with themselves. But it is extremely unwise and dangerous for a person to try and admit or reject things by himself, as if he were a standard in religion. Every person ought to try himself by the perfect standard of moral rectitude. And every christian ought constantly to advance beyond his present attainments. Nor ought

any christian ever to rest in himself, as a standard in respect to religion.

4. Since constant advancement in religion is the duty of christians, they should be careful to be thoroughly acquainted with their own imperfections. If they do not see in what respects they are imperfect and defective, they will not see what is to be reformed and amended in themselves. Christians, then, should be careful to obtain a thorough and intimate acquaintance with themselves, in order to advance in religious attainments. Every christian ought to be very particular in his attention to his failings and blemishes. A christian may think favorably of himself, because he avoids some errors and sins, while he does not avoid other errors and sins that are equally hateful and pernicious. Some real christians are peculiarly liable to err in one respect ; while other real christians are peculiarly liable to err in other respects. Besides their common imperfection and depravity, there are particular blemishes in every christian. These blemishes every christian must be exceedingly careful and watchful to discover in himself and remove, if he would advance in religion. Christians should constantly and impartially strive for an accurate and increasing knowledge of their imperfections, that they may remove from themselves every spot and wrinkle and every such thing ; and that they may be holy and without blemish.

5. From the present subject, we may perceive a striking difference between true and false professors of religion. This difference respects advancement in religion. As advancement in religion, is the constant duty, so it is the constant object of real christians. But false professors do not advance in the christian course. They are not truly alive unto God. Nor do they walk in the path of life. How can they, while dead in sin, advance in spiritual attainments ? It is certain, that a person, who is not a true christian, never grows in religion. False converts are content with a false hope. They think themselves something, when they are nothing, and so they deceive themselves. They may have a high opinion of their religious character and condition. They may imagine they are eminent for knowledge, piety and usefulness, while they are totally destitute of every christian attainment and exceedingly offensive and loathsome in the church of God. It is evident, that they are not christians, whatever they may think and profess, and whatever they appear to be, because they make no progress in real religion. Without life they cannot grow. Though they may at first appear well, they never appear better. The more they are known, the worse they appear. As they show no growth, they show that they have no life. But the real and living christian grows. And by his growth he shows that he is alive. In respect



to growth in the divine life, there will always be a striking difference between true and false professors of religion.

6. Since constant advancement in religion is the duty of every christian, we may see one object, which christians should always regard, when they examine themselves. They should be careful to inquire and see, whether they make any progress in religion.— They should not be satisfied, merely with evidence that they are christians. They should have decisive evidence that they have advanced, and do advance, in religious attainments. And they should seek for evidence of such advancement, when they examine themselves. They should inquire whether they advance in knowledge, holiness, usefulness and happiness. Though christians may be sensible, that they have been very indolent and inconstant in their course, yet every true christian does grow in the divine life.— Though they have a humble opinion of their present attainments, yet they may see that they have advanced in religion. If christians will carefully and impartially examine themselves, they may see, that they have advanced in divine knowledge. And the evidence of such advancement they may discover in an increasing conviction of their own ignorance. They may discover evidence of their advancement in holiness, by a more

keen and tender sense of their own sin, guilt and shame, of their constant and entire dependance upon the mercy of God for every blessing, and upon his holy and sovereign influence for every gracious affection. They may discover evidence of their advancement in usefulness, from a more watchful and ardent desire to serve and please God, and to embrace every opportunity to promote his kingdom on earth, whatever they may suffer for his name's sake. And they may discover evidence of advancement in happiness, from a spirit of increasing submission, contentment, gratitude and patience, under the trying and humbling allotments of divine providence.— As christians do advance in religious attainments, they are bound to see, with self-abasement, the truth, the power, the mercy, the faithfulness and the sovereignty of God in their advancement. When they find, that they have evidence of progress in religion and are excited by such evidence to praise God for his grace, and still to advance in religion, then their conduct is right; their condition is happy; and their prospects are pleasant and glorious. But there is nothing right in real christians, unless they advance in knowledge, holiness, usefulness and happiness. Let every christian, then, be able truly to say, in respect to advancement in religion, "*This one thing I do*"

THE GOSPEL ITS OWN WITNESS TO THOSE  
WHO EMBRACE IT.

No. I.

INTRODUCTION.

There is reason to believe, that there has never been, since the world began, a time, in which a greater variety of religious denominations, and a greater diversity of religious opinions existed, under a profession of the gospel, than do exist at the present day. To say nothing of the Grecian and Romish churches, there are in the Protestant countries many that say, I am of Luther; I am of Calvin; I am of Arminius; I am of Socinus; I am of Barclay; I am of Swedenborg; I am of Priestley; I am of Wesley; I am of Relley. If we attend to the variety of denominations, and the diversity of opinions, which exist among religious professors, in these United States, especially in New-England, and almost in every town and parish, we might be induced to imagine that we were in the land of Shinar, and not far from "the city and the tower, which the children of men builded." All these builders and babblers are equally zealous and active, noisy and bold. The professors of every sect, of every name, and every notion, appear to be equally confident, that the top of their city and tower will reach unto heaven. They profess to believe the gospel of the grace of God; they profess to be the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ; and they profess to re-

ceive the holy scriptures for the foundation of their faith and practice. But if the opinions and practices of the various professors of the gospel are founded on the scriptures, the scriptures are inconsistent and contradictory. Shall we, then, renounce the scriptures, on account of the variety of denominations, and the diversity of opinions, which exist among religious professors?—At a certain time, when the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, many of his professed disciples, on account of his doctrines, "went back and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." The apostles were satisfied, that Christ was the promised Messiah; that his doctrines were true; and that they who embraced his doctrines, would be conducted to eternal happiness. And they were convinced and assured, that there was no medium between embracing the gospel, which Christ taught, and despairing of salvation. Such a conviction and assurance were not peculiar to the apostles, but common to all persons, who truly embrace the gospel.—*For they, who truly embrace the gospel, are assured that there is no other way of salvation.*

This sentiment, which is now introduced to the attention and

consideration of the readers of the Christian Magazine, it is proposed to illustrate in the following numbers of this communication.

## No. II.

### AN EXPLANATION OF THE GOSPEL.

By the gospel is meant the scheme of grace, which God has revealed in the scriptures for the salvation of sinners through the death of Jesus Christ. That the gospel is a scheme of grace is abundantly evident from the whole system of divine truth, as well as from particular declarations in the scriptures. In the midst of dangers and afflictions, the apostle says, "None of these things move me, neither do I count my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." To the saints at Ephesus, he says, once and again, "By grace ye are saved." And of himself, he says, "By the grace of God I am what I am." Now grace consists in the exercise and expression of goodness in favor of sinful and guilty creatures. The gospel is a scheme of grace, as it is the plan, which God has formed in his wisdom and goodness for the salvation of sinners, who are as guilty as they are sinful, and deserve his wrath and curse forever. Since all mankind are sinful and guilty creatures, God could not, consistently with his goodness, save human beings from the pains of endless

death, without such a propitiation, as should manifest and exalt his justice, as well as his grace in their salvation.

That God might be just in their salvation, he has given his Son to die on the cross for sinners. But without such a sacrifice to his justice and such an atonement for sin, as God has made by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, he could not have saved a single person from the curse of the law. The doctrine of atonement through the death of Christ upon the cross is, therefore, a fundamental and essential doctrine of the gospel.—For without this atonement no human being could have been saved from endless punishment.

But the atonement of Jesus Christ and the offer of life through his death do not secure the salvation of a single person. For sinners hate Christ with perfect hatred and despise the offer of life through his death. Therefore God has, in the scheme of divine grace for the salvation of sinners, made provision for their sanctification, as well as for their justification. According to the gospel, the Holy spirit, by his special and powerful influence, causes sinners to repent and turn to God through Jesus Christ, and to believe and obey his holy requirements. But without this divine influence every human being, in full view of heaven and hell, and of the death of Christ upon the cross, and of the offer of salvation through his blood, would reject the counsel of God



against himself and perish forever.

The doctrine of sanctification through the special influence of the Holy Spirit is therefore a fundamental and essential doctrine of the gospel. For without this influence no human being would ever accept salvation from endless punishment.

Again.—There is no reason to suppose, that God would have laid a foundation for the forgiveness of sinners, or have made any provision for their sanctification, if he had not formed the purpose of redemption and determined what number and what persons he would save. Without such a divine purpose, it is certain that no human being ever would be saved from sin and death. But according to the gospel, God gave his Son such a number of the human family, as he thought wisest and best to save, in the eternal counsel of his own will. To this counsel is to be traced the mediation and atonement of Jesus Christ, the repentance and sanctification of sinners by the Holy Spirit and the salvation of every person, who is saved from sin and woe in hell and raised to the holiness and happiness of heaven. The doctrine of eternal, personal election is, therefore, a fundamental and essential doctrine of the gospel.—For without the purpose of God to save the elect, there would have been no atonement by the death of Christ, nor any sanctification by the Holy Spirit, nor any salvation

for any human being from eternal punishment.

The doctrines of election, atonement and sanctification are not only fundamental and essential doctrines of the gospel, but they are peculiar and the only peculiar doctrines of the gospel, in the strictest sense. All the other doctrines of natural and revealed religion might have been true, but these doctrines could not have been true, without the gospel of salvation. God might have existed forever; and he might have existed forever in the trinity of persons and the unity of his essence; he might have decreed and caused all things; and he might have caused sinful and guilty creatures to exist and perish forever, without the great purpose of redemption. But with this purpose, God cannot save sinners without an atonement; nor with an atonement, can he save sinners without their sanctification. Yet both the atonement by the death of Christ, and the sanctification of sinners by the Holy Spirit, originate from the eternal purpose of the Father to redeem his chosen people. To this purpose must be ascribed the salvation of sinners. If this purpose be obscured, or denied, the origin and foundation, the essence and glory of the gospel are obscured and denied; and nothing of God is truly seen in the gospel of his grace. If then we explain the gospel, according to its fundamental, essential and peculiar doc-

trines, it is the eternal purpose of God to save the elect from endless punishment, through the atone-  
ment of Jesus Christ, by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

JOHN.

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## EXTRACTS.

### THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF PRESIDENT EDWARDS.

I had a variety of concerns and exercises about my soul from my childhood; but had two more remarkable seasons of awakening before I met with that change by which I was brought to those new dispositions, and that sense of things that I have since had. The first time was when I was a boy, some years before I went to college, at a time of remarkable awakening in my father's congregation. I was then very much affected for many months, and concerned about the things of religion, and my soul's salvation; and was abundant in duties. I used to pray five times a day in secret, and to spend much time in religious talk with other boys, and used to meet with them to pray together. I experienced I know not what kind of delight in religion. My mind was much engaged in it, and had much self-righteous pleasure, and it was my delight to abound in religious duties. I, with some of my school-mates joined together, and built a booth in a swamp, in a very secret and retired place, for a place of prayer. And besides, I had particular secret places of my own in the woods,

where I used to retire by myself; and used to be from time to time much affected. My affections seemed to be lively and easily moved, and I seemed to be in my element when I engaged in religious duties. And I am ready to think, many are deceived with such affections, and such a kind of delight, as I then had in religion, and mistake it for grace.

But, in process of time, my convictions and affections wore off, and I entirely lost all those affections and delights, and left off secret prayer, at least as to any constant performance of it, and returned like a dog to his vomit, and went on in ways of sin.

Indeed I was at sometimes very uneasy, especially towards the latter part of the time of my being at college, till it pleased God, in my last year at college, at a time when I was in the midst of many uneasy thoughts about the state of my soul, to seize me with a pleurisy; in which he brought me nigh to the grave, and shook me over the pit of hell.

But yet it was not long after my recovery, before I fell again into my old ways of sin. But God

would not suffer me to go on with any quietness, but I had great and violent inward struggles; until after many conflicts with wicked inclinations, and repeated resolutions, and bonds that I laid myself under by a kind of vows to God, I was brought wholly to break off all former wicked ways, and all ways of known outward sin, and to apply myself to seek my salvation, and practice the duties of religion; but without that kind of affection and delight that I had formerly experienced. My concern now wrought more by inward struggles and conflicts, and self-reflections. I made seeking my salvation the main business of my life. But yet it seems to me, I sought after a miserable manner, which has made me sometimes since to question, whether ever it issued in that which was saving; being ready to doubt, whether such miserable seeking was ever succeeded. But yet I was brought to seek salvation in a manner that I never was before. I felt a spirit to part with all things in the world for an interest in Christ.—My concern continued and prevailed, with many exercising thoughts and inward struggles; but yet it never seemed to be proper to express my concern that I had by the name of terror.

From my childhood up, my mind had been wont to be full of objections against the doctrine of God's sovereignty, in choosing whom he would to eternal life, and rejecting whom he pleased, leaving

them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell.—It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me. But I remember the time very well, when I seemed to be convinced, and fully satisfied, as to the sovereignty of God, and his justice in thus eternally disposing of men, according to his sovereign pleasure. But never could give an account, how, or by what means, I was thus convinced; not in the least imagining, in the time of it, nor a long time after, that there was any extraordinary influence of God's Spirit in it; but only that now I saw further, and my reason apprehended the justice and reasonableness of it. However, my mind rested in it, and it put an end to all those cavils and objections that had till then abode with me all the preceding part of my life. And there has been a wonderful alteration in my mind, with respect to the doctrine of God's sovereignty, from that day to this, so that I scarce ever have found so much as the rising of an objection against God's sovereignty, in the most absolute sense, in showing mercy to whom he will show mercy, and hardening and eternally damning whom he will. God's absolute sovereignty and justice, with respect to salvation and damnation, is what my mind seems to rest assured of, as much as of any thing that I see with my eyes; at least it is so at times. But I have oftentimes since that first conviction, had quite another kind of sense of



God's sovereignty than I had then. I have often since, not only had a conviction, but a *delightful* conviction. The doctrine of God's sovereignty has very often appeared an exceeding pleasant, bright, and sweet doctrine to me : and absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God.

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A RELATION OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

During the uncommon attention to religion in —, I was led by the examples of other persons, to attend the meetings ; but I do not remember that my mind was particularly affected by religious subjects. After that time my mind was sometimes a little impressed about my unhappy and dangerous condition, as I had no reason to suppose I was in a state of friendship and favor with God.— In the month of last January, by means of a sermon on these words, “ Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee ; for I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity,” my mind was really awakened about my conduct and state. I saw and felt that I was in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. I felt that I was condemned by the law of God, and that he was greatly and justly angry with me for my sinful conduct. I was led to attend to my own heart and I found that my heart

was nothing but sin and wholly opposed to God and his law. I began to read the Bible with concern, but it gave me no comfort nor relief. I attempted to pray, but I felt that God would not hear me, because I was praying with a sinful heart, and my attempts to pray were wholly selfish. Religious instruction gave me no relief. It was wholly against me and increased my distress. In reading Baxter's call to the unconverted, I found something to this purpose. Ministers are willing to have persons go to them about their religious concerns, but sinners are not willing to go for instruction. On this I thought I would go to our minister. I found that he was willing and ready to converse with me.— He appeared to understand the state of my mind and to be interested for my salvation. But his instructions and prayers gave me no relief. They produced a greater conviction of my wickedness and misery and increased my distress. When he prayed that God would have mercy on me for his own sake, my heart rose against the petition. I had no desire that God would save me for his sake. All my desire was that he would save me for my own sake. Hence I was led to see, that I was wholly selfish and sinful in all my distress about myself. Though I knew I was wholly sinful in my prayers, yet I was displeased with God because he would not hear me, while I regarded iniquity in my heart. The dealings of God with

me seemed hard and I wished that there was no God to deal with me. My whole heart rose against him. I wished I had never been born. I would gladly have exchanged situations with the meanest brute. I felt condemned for my abuse of religious privileges, and felt that it would have been better for me if I had been a heathen. I was convinced that I ought to submit to God, but I supposed if I did, he would certainly condemn me and not save me. I thought that if I knew he would save me, I would submit to him at any time. But I could not bear to submit to him, while I was under the curse of his law and subject to his dreadful wrath. Such were my views and feelings, until, as I believe, in the month of April I saw and felt, that God would be holy, just and good in my condemnation and destruction. In view of his character I felt willing to be in his hands without knowing what he would do with me.— My mind was turned from myself. In view of God I was relieved, and was pleased and rejoiced, that he would be glorified whatever might become of me. I saw and knew that he is good in the destruction as well as in the salvation of sinners. My prayer then was, that God would save me for his own sake. I felt ashamed of my conduct in being so much concerned about myself while I had no regard to the glory of God.— In view of God I saw my own villainess and abhorred myself. I had yet no hope that I should be saved; nor any thought that I had experienced a saving change. I appeared more sinful and hateful to myself than ever I did before. My mind was turned about this time to Jesus Christ and to the way of salvation through him.— He appeared altogether lovely and glorious in his person, in his conduct, and in his death for sinners. My heart seemed turned to him with supreme love, though he should never save me. My mind was so turned from myself, that I had little concern or thought whether I had become a christian and should be saved. By religious conversation I was led to think more about the change in my views and feelings; and for a number of months I have had a little hope, that I may have passed from death unto life. Religious instruction has been comforting and pleasing to me. I was particularly pleased with a sermon on these words, “My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure.” The sovereign purpose and pleasure of God seem to be the support and joy of my heart. I am sensible, that I ought to live wholly to God and not to myself. For some time I have thought of making a public profession of religion. And it now appears to be my duty to offer myself before God and this assembly to his service and to the fellowship of his church and people. I cannot make this public and solemn offer of myself to God with-

out fear and trembling for my future conduct in this sinful, changing and trying world, and with an heart that is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. I do therefore request the prayers of real christians to God for me. My life, at longest, must be short. In view of life and death and all things, it is, if I do not deceive myself, my comfort and joy that God in all things will be glorified.

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A GOOD STYLE.

Our English translation of the Bible is simple in its language, and wholly free from affectation. The words that are used, are pure English; and there is not a phrase, which swells into bombast. The most sublime sentiments are expressed with perfect simplicity. Let a single instance be selected from hundreds, which might be mentioned. Were an inferior, pedantic writer to have represented the grand idea of God's creating light, after laboring and swelling, like the frog in the fable, he might, perhaps, have expressed it in the following manner:—"Deity gave command, that light, the fair first-born of nature, should spring into existence; and by his almighty fiat, light instantly ushered forth from the womb of eternal darkness and illuminated the opaque terrestrial ball with its glorious effulgence." But in the Bible the idea is expressed with

perfect ease.—"God said, let there be light, and there was light."

Real sublimity consists in noble thoughts, and not in the use of great words. When a writer or speaker is thought to be sublime, because he abounds in words and phrases, that are uncommon and labored, it is as ridiculous an absurdity as for a boy, who walks on stilts, to think himself taller than a man. Any polish of style, or arrangement of periods, which obscures the sense, is a real blemish in composition; though some half-learned persons may admire it as a beauty. We read or hear, not for the sound of words, but for instruction and knowledge. Hence, that is the best style, which conveys thoughts in the fewest words, and with the greatest plainness. The language of the scriptures, in our common translation, is concise and clear. It is the perfection of style to speak or write in such a manner, that the thoughts and not the words engage and fix our attention. When we read the Bible, while the thoughts strike our minds, we scarcely notice the words. But a bad style turns the attention to itself and not to the sentiment. Every attempt to embellish correct and noble thoughts by florid language, debases and obscures the subject. As well might one attempt to varnish the colors of the rainbow, as to adorn sublime sentiments by fine words.

The language of the Bible is an



excellent model for youth. Affected language is as disgusting as affected manners and dress. "For language is the dress of thought." Now youth, who are ambitious to excel, are apt, through a desire to distinguish themselves, to assume an affected language; or to make their style glitter with ornaments. Their style ought, therefore, to be formed at first upon a model of perfect and beautiful simplicity.

The tracts of Dr. Franklin have been read with eagerness and delight, for the simplicity of his language, as well as for his good sense. And how artless are the writings of Washington, whose manly thoughts are expressed in words, which children may understand. It is sufficient only to mention, that Addison and Swift, who have obtained the established reputation and distinction of *English Classics*, were remarkable for the easy and beautiful simplicity of their language. When youth are accustomed to a simple style, it will be easy to use judicious embellishments on proper occasions. But if they form a habit of affectation in language, it will be hard to cure it.

The style of the Bible is, especially, a complete model of pulpit language. This will be instantly allowed by competent judges in respect to prayer: and it would be easy to show that preaching loses a degree of its force, whenever the preacher departs from the style of the sacred scriptures.

When you hear it said of a preacher, "He uses a pretty, or a grand style," you may fear that his sermon has done little good. It may have pleased the fancy; but it has not awakened the conscience. The truths of the gospel are solemn and weighty. They admit of no decorations. To load divine truth with ornaments, is to obscure its beauty and blunt its force. The spirit and weight of divine truth can be conveyed only in the style of the Bible, which is both simple and pungent. The preacher, who uses the style of the Bible, will be easily understood by every hearer. Nor will the hearers even think of his words; they will see his thoughts.

There are two sorts of eloquence; though one scarcely deserves the name. It consists chiefly in labored and polished periods, curious and artificial arrangement of figures, tinselled with gaudy embellishments; but it conveys little light to the mind. This kind of eloquence is affected and admired by persons of a weak judgment and vicious taste, who have no richness nor vigor of sentiment. It is a vain and foolish eloquence, and has ever been esteemed below great and real geniuses. The other sort of eloquence is directly opposite. It is the natural expression of clear and correct sentiments in pure and simple language. The subject always guides and governs the language of the person, who is truly eloquent.—His words express his thoughts.—

And his thoughts arise in the order and beauty, in the majesty and simplicity of truth.

#### PLAN OF THE JEWISH SETTLEMENT.

We are gratified to learn from the number of Israel's Advocate for February, that the Directors of the American Society for meliorating the condition of the Jews have come to a decision as to the plan of their future operations — It appears that the project, originally contemplated, of an extensive colony in the interior of the state of New-York, has been abandoned, as too expensive, and the views of the Directors are now limited to the purchase of a tract of land of 5 or 6,000 acres, as the site of the intended Jewish settlement. The purchase has not yet been made, but it has been ascertained that land in abundance of a good quality, and well suited for the purpose, can be obtained ; and from the intelligence and caution of the committee appointed by the Directors to make the selection, it cannot be doubted that the purchase will be a judicious one. Until the land is procured, such Jews as may from time to time come to this country, are to be provided with accommodations at some place in the neighborhood of this city, where they are to reside *as one family*, at the expense of the society.

The following is the plan of the contemplated settlement as reported by the committee.

#### PLAN.

I. The object of the society is, to invite and receive, from any part of the world, such Jews as do already profess the Christian religion, or are desirous to receive Christian instruction, to form them into a settlement, and to furnish them with the ordinances of the gospel, and with such employment in the settlement as shall be assigned them.

II. The Jews who come to the settlement are to be *principally* employed in agricultural and mechanical operations.

III. In order to facilitate this object, the Board shall procure as much land as will afford a site for the necessary buildings, and the contemplated mechanical and agricultural operations.

IV. In order to afford the emigrants suitable religious instruction, a minister of the gospel shall be procured by the Board, whose duty it shall be to act as the general superintendent of the settlement.

V. A schoolmaster shall be provided, to teach the children and youth such branches of the different sciences as may fit them for becoming intelligent, respectable, and useful members of society.

VI. Theological instruction shall be provided in the settlement for such youth of piety and talent among the Jewish converts, as it may be deemed expedient to have qualified for becoming ministers of the gospel or missionaries.

VII. On the contemplated settlement, a farm shall be stocked, and furnished with suitable implements of husbandry. The produce of the farm shall be considered common stock for the support of the different members of the settlement; and an experienced farmer shall be placed thereon to manage its concerns.

VIII. All the members of the settlement are to be considered as a band of brethren, governed by the laws of our divine Redeemer, and associated together for the purpose of aiding each other in the concerns of the life that now is, and of that which is to come; and if any of the emigrants should act inconsistently with their profession, the Board reserve to themselves the right, at any time, to remove them; lest by their improper conduct they should corrupt the morals of the other members of the settlement.

The committee have not entered into the details of the internal regulations of the settlement.—Many of these must necessarily be left to circumstances and experience. They have contented themselves with submitting a general plan, which may form the basis of future operation, and which may be expanded and improved, as the necessities of our Jewish brethren may require, and the means of the society will admit.

A copy of this plan is to be sent to Count Von der Reeke with a request that he would act as the agent of the Board in making it

known in Germany, in ascertaining the names, numbers, and circumstances of Jews who may wish to come to the settlement, in forming societies to defray their expenses, and generally, in calling the attention of the religious public in Germany to the objects of the society.

As land suited for the purposes of the intended settlement cannot be procured for less than 4 or 5 dollars an acre, and as the purchase of 5,000 acres is contemplated, several thousand dollars will be required to enable the Board to commence their operations free from embarrassment.—The friends of the Society will, therefore, perceive the necessity for continuing and increasing their efforts.—*New-York Observer.*

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ANECDOTE.

A pious Divine had prayed earnestly many years that God would be pleased to send him a man to teach him the perfect way of truth. One morning, he was told in a dream to go to the church, where he would find an instructor in the way of truth. When he came to the church door, he found a man in rags, to whom he wished a good morning. "I never had a bad morning," replied the poor man. "That is singular; I wish you always fortunate." "I was never unfortunate," said he. "I wish you always happy," said the divine. "I was never unhappy,"



said the other. "I wish," said the divine, "you would explain your meaning." "That I will cheerfully do," replied the poor man. "I said that I never had a bad morning; for every morning, if I am pinched with hunger, I praise God. If it is rain, or snow, or hail, whether the day is serene or tempestuous, I praise God, and therefore I never have a joyless morning. If I am miserable in outward circumstances, and despised, I still praise God. You wished me to be fortunate; but I cannot be unfortunate, because nothing befalls me but according to the will of God; and I believe his will is always good in what he does, or promises to be done. You wished me always happy; but I cannot be unhappy, because my will is always resigned to the will of God." "But what would you say, if God should thrust you down to hell?" "I have two arms, humility and love, with which I would hold fast my incarnate God and Savior, and not let him go; and I would rather be in hell with God, than in heaven without him."

The divine, astonished at the poor man's answers, asked him whence he came. "I came from God." "Where did you find him?" "Where I left the world."—"Where did you leave him?"—"With the pure in heart," "What are you?" "I am a king." "Where is your kingdom?" "In my own heart. I have learned to rule my appetites and passions, and that is better than to govern any king-

dom in the world." "How were you brought into this happy condition?" "By silence, spiritual meditation, and union with God. Nothing below God could satisfy my desires. I have now found him, and in him I have found peace and rest."

#### ORDINATION.

The Rev. JAMES O. BARNEY was on the 4th inst. ordained over the Congregational Church and Society in Seekonk, Mass. The Introductory Prayer by the Rev. Mr. Fisk, of Wrentham; the Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Park, of Brown University, from Psalm CII. 16. *When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.* The Consecrating Prayer by the Rev. Mr. Clark, of Norton; the Charge by the Rev. Mr. Wilson, of Providence; the Righthand of Fellowship by the Rev. Mr. Wood, of Barrington; and the Concluding Prayer by the Rev. Mr. Ide, of Medway.

#### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Eubulus is under consideration.

Luther has much merit; but is not written with sufficient accuracy.

The Conclusion of a New-Year's Sermon, is received—and could it retain that importance and beauty, which it received from the character of the preacher, when delivered, it should be inserted in our pages.

Experiens is received, but in the present state of our work, we think it best to defer its insertion.

No communication, whatever be its merits, can be inserted unless it be written with sufficient accuracy to go to the press without being transcribed.

It cannot be expected, that communications which are not legible should be printed.